

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 196 739

SO 012 966

AUTHOR Wayman, Frank Whelon: Stockton, Ronald R.
TITLE The Structure and Stability of Political Attitudes:
Findings from the 1974-1976 Dearborn Panel Study.
PUB DATE Aug 80
NOTE 35p.; Prepared for delivery at Annual Meeting of the
American Political Science Association (Washington,
DC, August 28-31, 1980).
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Change; *Elections; *Political Affiliation;
*Political Attitudes; *Presidents; Public Opinion;
Research Methodology; *Voting

ABSTRACT

Based on a panel study of 800 voters in Dearborn, Michigan, this report examines the impact of political attitudes on the party system and on the presidential elections of 1972 and 1976. The central thesis is that public opinion can be classified into two clusters of attitudes, one which disrupts and the other which reinforces partisan voting. The Disintegration Cluster consists of attitudes on life styles, law and order, racial prejudice, and a hierarchy of values. The Alignment Cluster consists of attitudes toward government involvement in the economy and toward the party system. Also investigated was the stability of issues. It was found that party identification remains the most stable political object and that old and new issues exist simultaneously rather than new issues replacing old ones. In terms of the presidential elections, results indicate that the Disintegration Cluster had a significant effect in 1972. In that election the voter's choice of Nixon or McGovern was significantly affected by opinions on women's liberation, busing, and post-materialism. The 1976 election (Ford-Carter), however, was dominated by party identification and images of the candidates. (Author/KC)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED196739

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Frank Wayman,
Jr.

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

"The Structure and Stability
of Political Attitudes:
Findings From the 1974-1976
Dearborn Panel Study"

Frank Whelon Wayman
University of Michigan-Dearborn

Ronald R. Stockton
University of Michigan-Dearborn

SP 012 966

Prepared for delivery at the 1980 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, The Washington Hilton Hotel, August 28-31, 1980.

Copyright by the American Political Science Association.

ABSTRACT

The Structure and Stability of Political Attitudes: Findings from the 1974-1976 Dearborn Panel Study

Frank Whelon Wayman and Ronald R. Stockton
University of Michigan--Dearborn

The present paper examines the structure and stability of public opinion between the 1972 and 1976 Presidential elections. The paper is based on a four-wave panel study of 800 voters in Dearborn, Michigan; interviews were conducted in the springs of 1974, 1975, 1976 and the fall of 1976 immediately after the Presidential election. The study was designed to examine the impact of political attitudes on the party system and on the Presidential elections of 1972 and 1976. In the present paper, we (1) describe the structure of the attitudes which we examined, (2) apply our structural framework to the analysis of the stability of political attitudes, and (3) briefly discuss the relevance of the attitudes to the 1972 and 1976 campaigns.

The central thesis of our structural analysis is that public opinion can be disaggregated into two clusters of attitudes, one of which disrupts and the other of which reinforces partisan voting. The first cluster, called the Disintegration Cluster, consists of attitudes on life styles, law and order, racial fear, racial prejudice, and the Inglehart value hierarchy. The second cluster, called the Alignment Cluster, consists of attitudes towards government involvement in the economy and towards the party system. Based on the correlations between the seven factors making up the clusters, and based on a split in Democratic Party ranks on the Disintegration Cluster, we forecast neither realignment nor disintegration of the party system, but instability, with election outcomes affected by which attitudinal factors are salient during a campaign.

Turning to the stability of political attitudes, we discuss the degree to which our study replicates the 1972-1974-1976 national panel and the degree to which it explores new topics. We find signs of increased voter opinion crystalization compared to the 1956-1958-1960 national panel, as do Converse and Marcus (1979). Looking at this increased stability from the point of view of the seven opinion dimensions, we find that the higher stability of issues is localized in the new morality and law and order dimensions of opinion. It does not seem to reflect across-the-board increases in voter sophistication so much as the emergence of a few issues on which opinions are very fixed. Party identification remains the most stable political object, so realignment is not occurring in our community. Rather than new issues replacing old issues, we find the old and new issues existing simultaneously, with changes in voting being dependent on relative issue salience.

Finally, our voting studies, not fully presented in this paper because of space and time constraints, indicate that the Disintegration Cluster had a significant effect on the 1972 election, but that issues did not have a significant effect on our voters in the 1976 election, once party identification and several new measures of candidates' image were controlled for.

The Structure and Stability of Political Attitudes:
Findings From the 1974-1976 Dearborn Panel Study

This paper addresses four questions: First, given that public opinion is inevitably multidimensional, what are the main issue dimensions which existed in the 1970's?

Second, what is the link between these new issue dimensions and the pre-existing partisan alignment, and what impact do the new issues have upon party stability?

Third, which dimensions show signs of stability and which are in transition?

Fourth, what impact did these issues have on Presidential voting?

To examine these questions, we chose a panel of 801 people in Dearborn, Michigan, a city of 95,000 in the Detroit metropolitan area. We conducted interviews with this panel at four points in time, in the springs of 1974, 1975, 1976, and in the fall of 1976, immediately after the presidential election.

The findings of this study are not likely to be revolutionary because of the wealth of excellent public opinion research being conducted on these and similar topics. We also note that the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies is now beginning to release its 1972-1976 panel findings and will surely document national trends in a definitive manner.¹ However, this paper does clarify certain relationships and adds certain insights into the nature of public opinion and its impact on voting decisions and the parties.

The authors prepared this study with the benefit of a wealth of previous research which is both empirically impressive and theoretically insightful. The thrust of that research has been to establish certain patterns or trends with regard to public opinion, especially when one compares the 1950's (a watershed both politically and in terms of research) with the late 1960's and 1970's. These trends and patterns are well known to most scholars, and hence will only be summarized here. Briefly they show that the old social welfare issues of the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's are declining in saliency; identification with the parties has weakened but not broken; party voting has declined; political apathy and political ideology are both increasing; perhaps most critically, new issues have emerged which are volatile, strongly held, and persistent. These issues are not overtly economic in nature; they include such social or moral topics as race, crime, abortions, drug use, and the family. These issues do not correspond to socio-economic cleavage lines and hence have served to disrupt the parties and to reduce vote predictability.²

Several questions have emerged from these findings which will be addressed in this paper. The first deals with exactly how many new issue dimensions there are, how and if they are inter-related, and whether they

are linked to the previous new deal-social welfare dimensions which was the basis of the political era which began in the 1930's. There is reason to believe that various of these new issues are linked to each other. Gun control and crime for example seem logically linked as do busing and racial attitudes. Others (abortion and gun control) seem to have no logical linkage.

The question of whether the new issues are linked to each other in some coherent manner or are merely ad hoc is a critical one. We are assuming that if they are merely ad hoc then they can be isolated in the political system and handled one at a time as they emerge without producing any change or disruption. However, if they are linked to each other, they have the capacity to restructure the present alignment or to disrupt it on an on-going basis.³ The realignment-disruption potential is also linked to the question of whether the old issues and the new issues are still relevant, or are merely artifacts of the past.⁴

The Structure of Attitudes

We asked respondents dozens of questions taping attitudes and issue positions. We were able to single out 25 of these items which were linked together in a series of seven factors (Table 1). These seven factors in turn were linked to each other in two main clusters. The first cluster we call the Alignment Cluster because it is associated with and reinforces persistent partisan loyalties of the electorate. Its components are party identification and Social Welfare Liberalism. The second cluster we call the Disintegration Cluster because it encompasses attitudes which destabilize the party system. It is made up of law and order, an Inglehart-type value system, racial prejudice, racial fears, and life style. The Alignment Cluster and the Disintegration Cluster are almost completely unrelated to each other. They are "nearly decomposable" in the language of cognitive psychologists. Simply stated, the fact that a person is liberal on the Alignment Cluster does not tell us whether he will be liberal or conservative on the Disintegration Cluster. His mind can be split, for our purposes, into two distinct parts. This can be done because he does not himself make any connection between attitudes in the Disintegration Cluster.

But while the two clusters are independent of each other we find that within each cluster the various factors are associated together in an integrated way. This is an important pattern which deserves elaboration. First however let us look at the nature of the seven factors and their component parts.

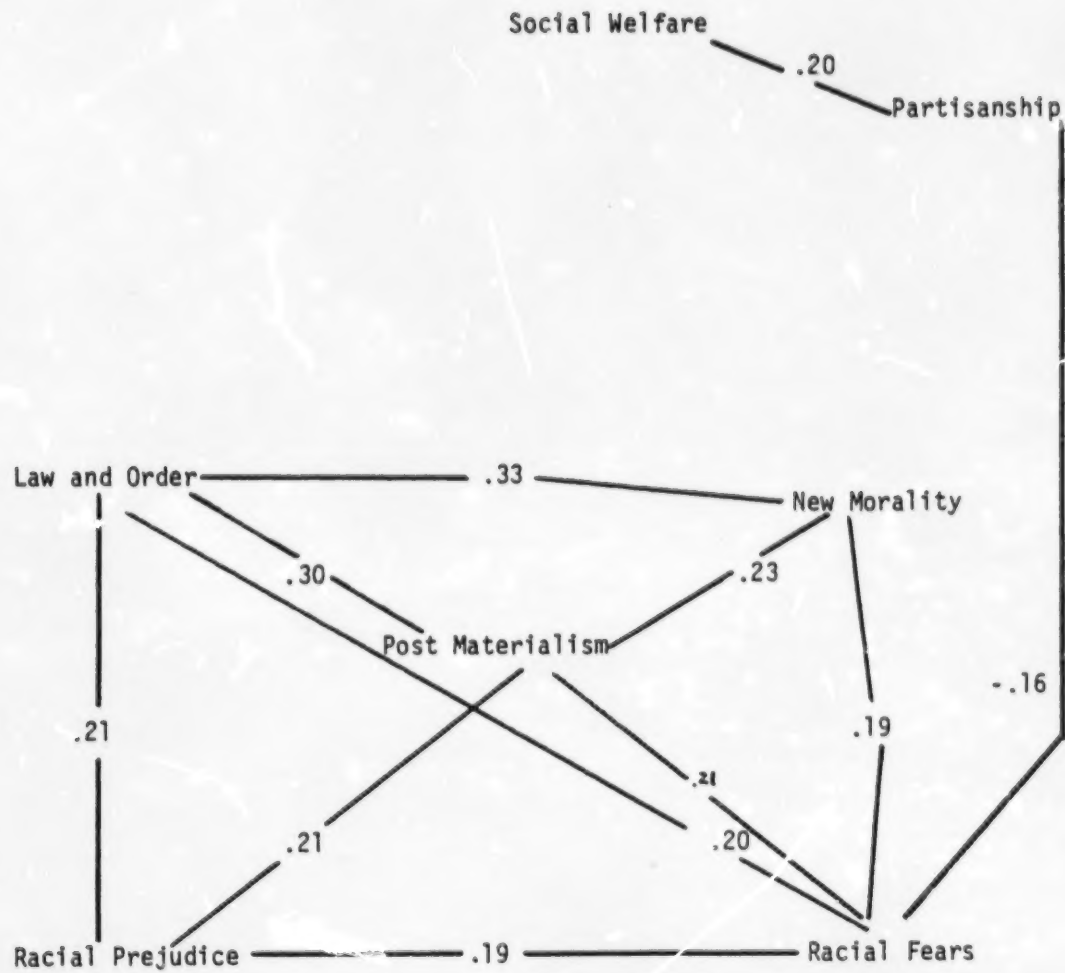
The first factor we call "prejudice" because it has measures of attitudes towards blacks associated with it: a thermometer question on blacks, a question on whether inter-racial marriage is morally wrong or a matter of personal taste, and a question on whether black unemployment rates are the fault of blacks or of the system. A second factor we called "social welfare," because it includes questions about government programs in the areas of income, jobs, medicine, and housing. A third factor, "new Morality," involves thermometers on marijuana users, homosexuals, and women's lib, and opinions on X-rated films, sex education, and abortion. A fourth factor, "law and order" includes attitudes on capital punishment, George Wallace, whether judges are too soft on criminals, police search of suspects, and items on busing and gun control. A fifth factor, "partisanship," includes party identification and the difference between Republican and Democratic Party thermometer ratings. A sixth factor includes two measures of the Inglehart value hierarchy, which we call "materialism." The final factor, "racial fears," includes thermometer items on Black militants and urban rioters.

If each of these factors represents a basic, underlying attitude, it is important to study how these attitudes are correlated, or clustered together. This can be done by examining the correlation table (Table 2) for the seven factors. This table, and its schematic representation in Table 3, shows that there are two clusters of factors. The first cluster

Table 1. Varimax Factor Analysis of Key Questionnaire Items

Factors:	1. Racial Prejudice	2. Social Welfarism	3. New Morality	4. Law & Order	5. Partisan- ship	6. Material- ism	7. Racial Fears
Blacks	<u>.78</u>	.03	.08	-.04	.07	.03	.07
Intermarriage	<u>-.35</u>	.00	.28	.24	-.01	-.15	-.02
Black Employment	<u>.27</u>	.06	-.09	-.21	.06	.07	.15
Income Welfare	.07	<u>.72</u>	-.08	-.07	-.06	.05	.00
Job Welfare	.08	<u>.55</u>	.12	-.03	-.14	.01	.02
Health Welfare	.00	<u>.55</u>	-.02	.03	-.08	-.03	-.07
Housing Welfare	<u>-.09</u>	<u>.44</u>	.03	.09	-.11	-.03	-.10
Marijuana Users	.07	-.05	<u>-.69</u>	-.15	.02	.10	.35
Homosexuals	.17	.05	<u>-.43</u>	-.12	-.08	.13	.26
Sex Education	.18	.08	<u>-.43</u>	-.11	-.09	.08	.00
X-Rated Films	.06	.01	<u>.43</u>	-.21	-.16	-.13	-.05
Abortion	.08	.05	<u>.36</u>	.05	.06	-.02	.01
Women's Lib	.23	-.16	<u>-.26</u>	-.10	-.02	.16	.17
Capital Punishment	<u>-.12</u>	.15	.07	<u>.51</u>	-.01	-.12	-.02
Wallace	.00	-.13	.05	<u>.44</u>	.12	-.09	-.02
Judges Too Soft	.03	-.01	-.17	<u>-.40</u>	.11	.00	.13
Police Search	<u>-.07</u>	.04	-.25	<u>-.33</u>	.18	.13	.08
Busing	<u>-.09</u>	.15	.08	<u>.31</u>	-.06	-.24	-.23
Gun Registration	.07	-.01	-.06	<u>-.22</u>	-.04	.01	-.04
Part I.D.	<u>-.06</u>	.32	-.02	-.06	<u>-.76</u>	-.09	.00
Rating Dems. & Reps.	<u>-.06</u>	.22	-.10	.02	<u>-.69</u>	-.08	-.05
Inglehart #2	.08	-.01	-.14	-.11	.01	<u>.74</u>	.09
Inglehart #1	.06	.02	-.15	-.13	.11	<u>.49</u>	.02
Urban Rioters	.05	-.09	-.21	.04	.00	.00	<u>.75</u>
Black Militants	.21	-.16	-.07	-.25	.12	.18	<u>.46</u>

Table 3. Strongest Inter-Factor Relationships



is made up of attitudes on the New Deal questions and on party identification. New Dealism is uncorrelated with any of the five other issue dimensions. This means that a person's liberalism or conservatism on this dimension is unrelated to his liberalism or conservatism on race, life style, or law and order issues. New Dealism is correlated with partisanship, showing that the political parties are still seen by the voters in terms of the historic New Deal alignment. Partisanship itself is weakly associated with racial fears and materialism. This indicates that Republicans are slightly more prone to racial fear and to materialism than Democrats. But there are no partisan differences on prejudice, new morality, or law and order. Partisanship and New Dealism are strongly correlated with each other as a first cluster.

The second cluster to emerge out of this analysis contains the other five factors -- the ones identified as the new issues of the sixties and seventies: materialism, racial fears, racial prejudice, life style, and law and order. Almost all (nine out of ten) of the possible correlations across the two clusters are even moderately high. In terms of our realignment framework, we have identified a Disintegrating Cluster of five interrelated, cross-cutting issues, each of which is basically at right angles to (uncorrelated with) the New Deal partisanship alignment.

The Alignment Cluster

To Richard Nixon, the Democratic Party was fragmented by ideological divisions which would rip it asunder. Democratic support groups such as factory workers, ethnic voters, and Catholics were no longer economically deprived and in need of government help and programs. Their prosperity and middle class life style would create in them a conservative ideology on the role of the government on the economy, and they would be weaned away from their old commitment to federal activism.⁶

Our data show that this is simply not the case. When we look at either the factor analysis or item by item comparison of party identification and specific issues (Table 4) we find the same pattern: the traditional expectation that Democrats are liberal and Republicans conservative remains. The average percentage difference between Democrats and Republicans in terms of support for federal activism on the eight issues listed is twenty-eight percent. On only two issues -- encouraging low cost medical care and providing educational support for poor students -- do a majority of Republicans take an activist position. On every single issue but one -- government jobs -- Democrats provide majority support for an activist position, and even on that one issue the ratio of activists to anti-activists is over two to one. These data demonstrate the persistent linkage between partisanship and position on New Deal Issues. They suggest that even now Democrats have a built-in advantage in any election in which economic ideology is the relevant issue. They also suggest that divisions within the parties are less important than differences across the parties at least in terms of this

Table 4. Party Identification and Support for Social-Welfare Activism.

% difference Democrats minus Republicans	Party Identification Compared With ...	Dem.	Ind.	Rep.	Tau-b χ^2	Significance
38	Federal Housing	67	58	29	.33	.0000
33	Government Jobs	74	63	41	.29	.0000
40	Federal Medical Program (1-7 Scale)					
	+	64	44	24		
	0	10	23	16		
	-	26	33	60	.32	.0000
28	Government In- come Guarantee	61	47	33	.25	.0000
24	Government Quit Programs	56	66	80	-.22	.0000
18	Government Promote inexpensive medical care	86	92	68	.19	.0000
29	Government jobs (1-7 Scale)					
	+	39	13	10		
	0	18	18	13		
	-	43	69	74	.25	.0000
15	Government aid to education of poor students	72	78	57	-.18	.003

important dimension.

Cross Cluster Linkages

With only two exceptions, none of the new social-type issues are closely linked to either social welfare or partisanship. To those observers from Barry Goldwater to William Rusiter who viewed "conservatism" as undimensional, and who hoped to create a new conservative majority,⁷ this must be a disappointing finding.

Some observers had speculated on the possible interconnection of economic conservatism to cultural and social conservatism. Instead two distinct clusters co-exist within the same political space, one connected to partisanship and one not. The result has been that the new issues have the power to disrupt but not to realign. The basic structure of alignment remains intact (though weakened for various reasons).⁸ However, as issue salience shifts, the linkage of people to parties also shifts, producing defections and disruptions. In particular the public opinion-partisanship structure, as presently constituted, gives Republicans -- the minority party on the Alignment dimensions -- an incentive to focus public attention on Disintegration issues in the hope of inducing defections. Various single issue groups, such as right to life activists or ERA activists, also push the system in the direction of Disintegration. As we shall see shortly this has the potential of creating a social-issues conservative majority of Republicans and defecting Democrats.

THE STABILITY OF OPINION

For a variety of reasons, it is important to know the stability as well as the structure of individuals' political attitudes. That is to say, we want to know how opinions on an issue change over time, as well as how they are related to opinions on other issues at the same point in time. It is to this topic of change over time that we now turn.

The study of change in public opinion over time has usually been based on a comparison of a number of different surveys, each of which contained a different set of respondents. Such analyses can tell us a great deal about aggregate change, but very little about individual-level change. The study of change at the level of the individual has benefited most from the type of panel study in which many questions are repeated to the same individuals three or even four times at appropriate intervals.

Imagine, for example, that for some reason on a given issue liberals were becoming more conservative and conservatives were becoming more liberal. A series of three independent public opinion studies conducted over time would not show this change since in each case the relative balance of liberals and conservatives would remain the same. The panel, on the other hand would immediately detect the change. In the second wave it would be clear that a change was occurring, and in the third wave it would be certain that it was not the result of "noise" (statistically random variations).

The common technique for measuring such change is the "continuity" correlation coefficient in which the answers of individuals are compared with how those individuals answered in previous years. The lower the correlation, the greater the difference in answer patterns from year to year. If random noise is the cause of change then the amount of change from wave one to wave two should be the same as the amount of change from wave one to wave three. If true changes of opinion are occurring throughout the time of our study, then there should be more change in the larger time period from wave one to wave three than in any shorter time span.*

The continuity correlations from our panel study are presented in Table 5. As seen in that table, some questions such as party identification correlate highly with themselves over time while others such as whether the government should give loans to poor students have a low correlation.

Before taking a more detailed look at response change over time, let us first clarify exactly what this table represents. The correlations represent how the answers of individual respondents in specific questions compare with how the same respondents answered identical questions in different years. (Persons who did not answer a question in a given year were omitted from the analysis for that year. Similarly, questions which were not asked in two or more years could not be included.) High correlations show highly consistent responses from year to year.

In analyzing thermometer items or other items where responses fall into an ordered pattern of increasing support or opposition for a position, one should remember that the computer looks for relative position on the scale rather than specific position. That means if there were a national trend of some sort so that every respondent moved in one direction (such as happened to Richard Nixon's popularity between 1973 and 1974) the result could still be a high correlation since the supporters could still be supporters and opponents still opponents, even though both groups are lower on the scale.

Analysis of such change in individuals' opinions has been impeded by the limited amount of panel data available. The two major national panel studies are the 1956-1960 and the 1972-1976 national election panels conducted at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Analysts have examined those studies to discover which political objects are most stable in voters' minds. For example, the 1956-1960 panel indicated that partisanship was more highly self-correlated, and hence more stable, than opinions on issues.⁹ The 1972-1976 panel indicated that opinions on political leaders ranked between partisanship and issues in terms of two-year stability.¹⁰ Also, the 1972-1976 panel was examined for evidence that voters had become more consistent in their opinions from year to year than they had been in the 1950's.

One reason it is useful to examine these differences is that items

*We have left aside a third possibility: cyclical change.

Table 5. Stability and Change in Attitudes

VARIABLE ^a	CONTINUITY CORRELATIONS ^b		
	1974-75	1975-76	1974-76
1. Party Identification	.70	.73	.74
2. Edward Kennedy	.58	.72	.71
3. Abortion	.60	.54	.69
4. Labor Unions	.57	.69	.64
5. Reagan	.59	.54	.62
6. Wallace	.62	.62	.59
7. Democrats	.63	.64	.56
8. Capital Punishment	.60	.61	.53
9. Government Income	.41	.42	.52
10. Liberals	.46	.48	.50
11. Republicans	.49	.56	.49
11. Homosexuals	.50	.60	.49
11. X-rated	.43	.59	.49
11. Politicians	.44	.55	.49
15. Police Search	.46	.55	.48
16. Marijuana Users	.62	.53	.46
17. Big Business	.42	.43	.45
17. Black Employment	.40	.52	.45
17. Black Militants	.47	.53	.45
20. Busing	.38	.42	.43
20. Ford	.36	.54	.43
20. Pollution	.46	.36	.43
23. Government Jobs	.41	.45	.41
24. Racial Inter-marriage	.40	.53	.40
25. Gun Control	.39	.43	.39
25. Conservatives	.46	.47	.39
27. Self-Actualization	.38	--	--
27. Women's Liberation	.44	.49	.38
29. Government Health Care	.42	.38	.37
30. Blacks	.44	.43	.35
31. Sex Education	.45	.33	.34
32. Government Housing	.43	.37	.32
32. Whites	.34	.42	.32
34. News Bias	.49	.38	.30
35. Government Education	.31	.28	.28
36. Carter	--	.06	--

- a. Questions arranged in order of declining two-year continuity correlations.
- b. A continuity correlation is the correlation between a variable and itself measured at two different points in time.

with higher stability may be causally prior to items with low continuity correlations.¹¹ (For example, given the high and stable correlation pattern of party identification in Table 5, it is implausible that the new issues caused major change in partisanship from 1974-1976.) Moreover, high continuity correlations, as a possible indicator of "attitude crystallization,"¹² may indicate a growing degree of ideological coherence and political sophistication among voters. 'Attitude crystallization' refers to the idea that if respondents think more about public issues and begin to really have opinions on them, then they will begin to see linkages from one issue to another that will boost correlations in a one-time (i.e., cross-sectional) survey, and will show more consistency from year to year, as shown in panel continuity correlations. With evidence from cross-sectional surveys, Nie has argued that American voters have organized their political attitudes into more highly inter-correlated clusters than in earlier decades.¹³ Since findings from cross-sectional data are in dispute, and also because crystallization across time may not covary with crystallization at one point in time, it is appropriate to turn to panel data for evidence about the degree of coherence in mass beliefs.¹⁴

Converse and Markus have already begun to address this problem with the help of the 1972-1976 national panel study. Issue continuity correlations, they found, were much more variable in the 1972-1976 panel than in the 1956-1960 study. In particular, some "moral" issues such as abortion had very high continuity correlations in the 1970's, but other issues showed the pattern of lower continuity correlations typical in the 1950's.¹⁵ Table 6 shows the degree of overlap of questions between our study and theirs.¹⁶ Our analysis can enrich their findings in at least two ways. First, because we asked many questions identical to the ones asked in the national panel and also many unique questions, we can use the continuity correlations from the former to demonstrate the similarity of Dearborn to the nation, and then use the continuity correlations from the latter to extend our understanding into new areas. Second, we can apply the Alignment and Disintegration framework to help resolve the problem of what types of issues have the high continuity correlations that have aroused such interest. Our technique is to classify questions according to the factor structure with which we began this paper, and to rank the questions from the highest continuity correlations to the lowest. The continuity correlations over a two-year span were used, to insure maximum comparability to the I.S.R. studies. Each dimension of public opinion can then be compared to the others to see which is the most stable. One way to compare the dimensions is in order of the highest continuity correlation each one contains. Thus, partisanship would rank first because one of its elements, party identification, has the highest continuity correlation (.74); opinions on political leaders would rank second because Edward Kennedy thermometers have a continuity correlation of .71; and the new morality would rank third because abortion attitudes have a continuity correlation of .69. Another approach would be to rank the dimensions in terms of the average continuity correlation for all the items within each dimension. The first approach runs the risk of instability because it stakes everything on one correlation; the second approach runs the danger

Table 6. Overlap between Dearborn Three-Wave Panel Opinion Questions
(N = 45) and the Michigan CPS Three-Wave Questions.

IN CPS THREE WAVES--
A. WITH SAME WORDING
(N = 13):

Liberals
Policemen
Democrats
Whites
Labor Unions
Black Militants
Republicans
Blacks
Conservatives
Edward Kennedy
George Wallace
Public Officials Don't Care
Politics So Complicated

B. WITH SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT WORDING
(N = 7):

Big Business
Women's Lib Movement
Marijuana Users
Nation's Problems (Open)
Busing
Don't Have Much Say
Party Identification

NOT IN CPS THREE WAVES (N = 25)*

Homosexuals
Politicians
Ronald Reagan
Gerald Ford
News Bias
Taxes to Reduce Pollution
Black Unemployment
Racial Inter-marriage
Sex Education
X-Rated Films
Happiness Now
Happiness in Future
Happiness Five Years Ago
Both Major Parties Benefit Few
Can't Do Anything About Public Affairs
Politicians Can't Be Trusted
Government Housing Loans
Government Student Loans
Capital Punishment
Police Search
Abortion
Government Health Care
Government Jobs
Government Income Maintenance

* Most of the items in this column have no counterparts at all in the CPS panel; examples would be the questions on Ronald Reagan, taxes to reduce pollution, and personal happiness. Some items, however, do tap issues that are examined in the CPS panel. Abortion, for example, is in the CPS study; one CPS seven-point scale on government medical insurance and another combining government income and job guarantees are similar to some of our Social Welfare panel items. Thus, a few items at the end of the right hand column might be reclassified to a category C in the left hand column: "too different in coding and wording to be easily compared across the studies, but attempting to measure the same attitude."

of diminishing a factor because a few confusing or poorly worded questions, with consequently low continuity correlations, were included in it. Neither approach is clearly superior; fortunately, they both produce about the same results.

As seen in Table 7, the highest stability is possessed by partisanship (with continuity correlations ranking from first to eleventh in stability)!⁷ Next come the attitudes toward political leaders (continuity correlations from third to thirty-first), the single Racial Fears item (continuity correlation ranking seventeenth), and the Law and Order items (continuity correlations from eighth to twenty-fifth). Social Welfare is lower (continuity correlations from ninth to thirty-fourth). In other words, three of the cross-cutting dimensions are more stable than the Social Welfare issues that ostensibly created and sustain the party system. Furthermore the type of instability for the New Deal issues indicates voter confusion and random responses, whereas the instability that does exist on New Morality is partly a consequence of people genuinely changing their minds. This can be seen (in Table 5) in the continuity correlations on women's liberation, marijuana, and perhaps sex education, where the time one to time three (T₁ to T₃) continuity correlations are much lower than the time one to time two (T₁ to T₂) or time two to time three continuity correlations. Hence, the New Morality, Racial Fear, and Law and Order dimensions not only tend to be more stable than Social Welfare, but also seem to have a higher ratio of purposive to random change.

But not all dimensions of the Disintegration Cluster possess the relatively stable continuity correlations of the New Morality, Racial Fears, and Law and Order. Racial Prejudice and the Inglehart value hierarchy have continuity correlations as weak (from seventeenth to thirty-second) as Social Welfarism. It seems that Racial Prejudice, most salient in national politics from 1954 to the mid-1960's, exhibits the low continuity correlations that one associates with issues, such as Social Welfare, from the 1950's and before.

Since the "new issues" of the Disintegration Cluster -- law and order and the new morality -- are accounting for the highest continuity correlations among issue items, it would appear that much of the increased stability of political beliefs from the 1950's to the 1970's is not the result of increased education of the populace, nor an across-the-board effect of leadership. Rather, it seems possible that the increased coherence across time is a consequence of the emergence in the late 1960's and early 1970's of highly emotional cross-cutting issues -- new morality, law and order, and racial fear -- that produced strong and persistent opinions among a broader group of the electorate than had been polarized by the sorts of issues that dominated political debate in the 1950's and even in the early 1960's.

Our findings of the high stability of party identification suggests strongly that no realigning was occurring during the years of our study. The high stability of the attitudes on law and order, racial fears, and new morality, however, suggest that the destabilizing issues have considerable staying power and have the potential to disrupt future elections in which they

Table 7. Stability of Each Type of Issue, and of Other Opinions, 1974-1976.^a

PARTY	POLITICAL LEADERS	NEW MORALITY	LAW & ORDER	RACIAL FEARS	SOCIAL WELFARE	RACIAL PREJUDICE	INGLEHART VALUES	MISCELLANEOUS
1	2	3						4 (Unions)
	5							
7	6							
		8			9			10 (Liberals)
11	11	11, 11						
		16	15					
	20		20	17		17		17 (Business) 20 (Pollution)
					23			
			25			24		25 (Conservatives)
		27					27*	
					29			
		31				30		
					32	32		34 (News Bias)
					35			
Mean=	Mean=	Mean=	Mean=	Mean=	Mean=	Mean=	Mean=	Mean=
6.3	8.8	16.5	17.0	17.0	25.6	25.8	27.0	18.3

*The Inglehart dimension is measured with a one-year continuity correlation coefficient because the same question was not repeated in three consecutive years.

A. The numbers in this table are the rankings of the continuity correlations from Table 4.1.

might become salient. This opens the stage for our examination of the 1972 and 1976 Presidential elections, which seem to have been significantly affected by shifts in issue saliency.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE ALIGNMENT AND DISINTEGRATION CLUSTERS TO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

As political scientists, we were of course interested in these dimensions of public opinion because of their potential influence on parties and elections. While space limitations preclude a detailed analysis in the present paper, we do want to briefly outline our basic findings about the nature of this influence. Using path analysis models to search for the "causes" of the vote for President, we found very different patterns in the 1972 and 1976 Presidential elections. In the 1972 election, the choice between Nixon and McGovern was shaped not only by party identification and the voter's evaluation of the two candidates, but also by the voter's position in three issue dimensions of the Disintegration Cluster.¹⁸ In the 1976 election, the choice of Carter or Ford was not influenced significantly by any of the six issue dimensions -- wither Aligning or Disintegrating. Instead, the election was shaped by party identification and by images of the candidates.¹⁹ The latter seemed to be more influenced by party identification and media content than by the issue position of the voter.

Our findings concern the 1972 election are outlined in Fig. 1. The voter's choice of Nixon or McGovern was significantly affected by opinions on women's liberation, on busing, and on post-materialism.* Republicans and independents almost all voted for Nixon, and he also gained about half of the Democratic voters. His appeal to those "Nixon Democrats" can be understood better in the context of Table 8. That table shows the Nixon Democrats had ideological reasons to be comfortable with Nixon's stand on the "social issues" (i.e., the Disintegration Cluster). In the four disintegration dimensions presented in that table, the Nixon Democrats were actually the most conservative group -- more conservative than the Republicans.²⁰ The McGovern Democrats were the most liberal. Clearly, the Democratic Party was split in half on these issues. Indeed, Nixon Democrats were closer to the Republicans than to the rest of their own party. But on "Social Welfare" issues, the Democrats remain united in opposition to the Republicans. If economic issues were to dominate the national agenda, as in 1976, the Democratic Party rank and file would tend to group together in opposition to the Republicans.

Such a partisan division is basically what happened in 1976, as can be seen in Fig. 2. None of the six issue dimensions played a significant role in shaping the voting.

*In the path analysis, each of the seven dimension were represented by the item (from among those loading mainly on it) which best predicted the Presidential vote.

Figure 1. The 1972 Vote (Path Analysis)

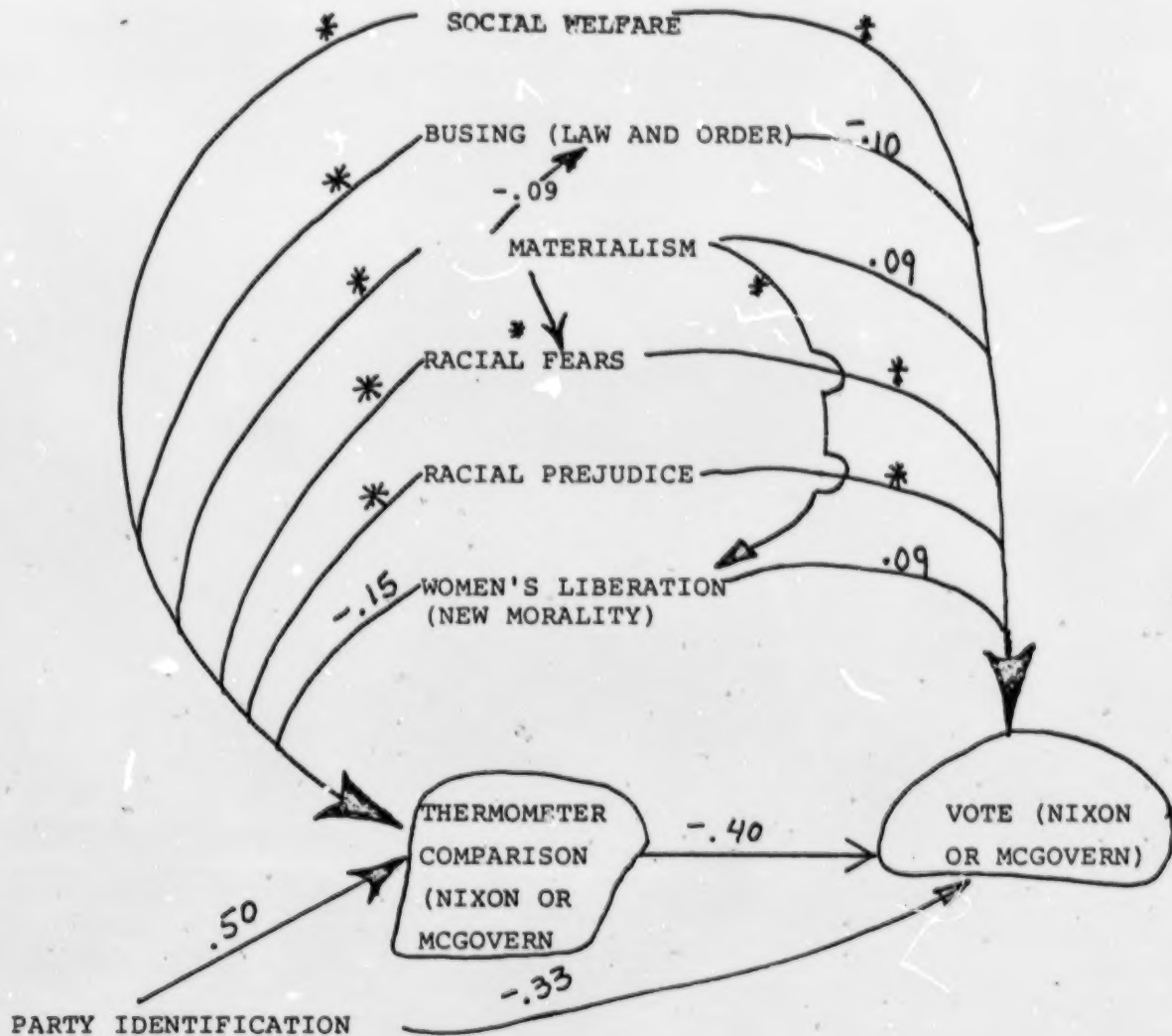


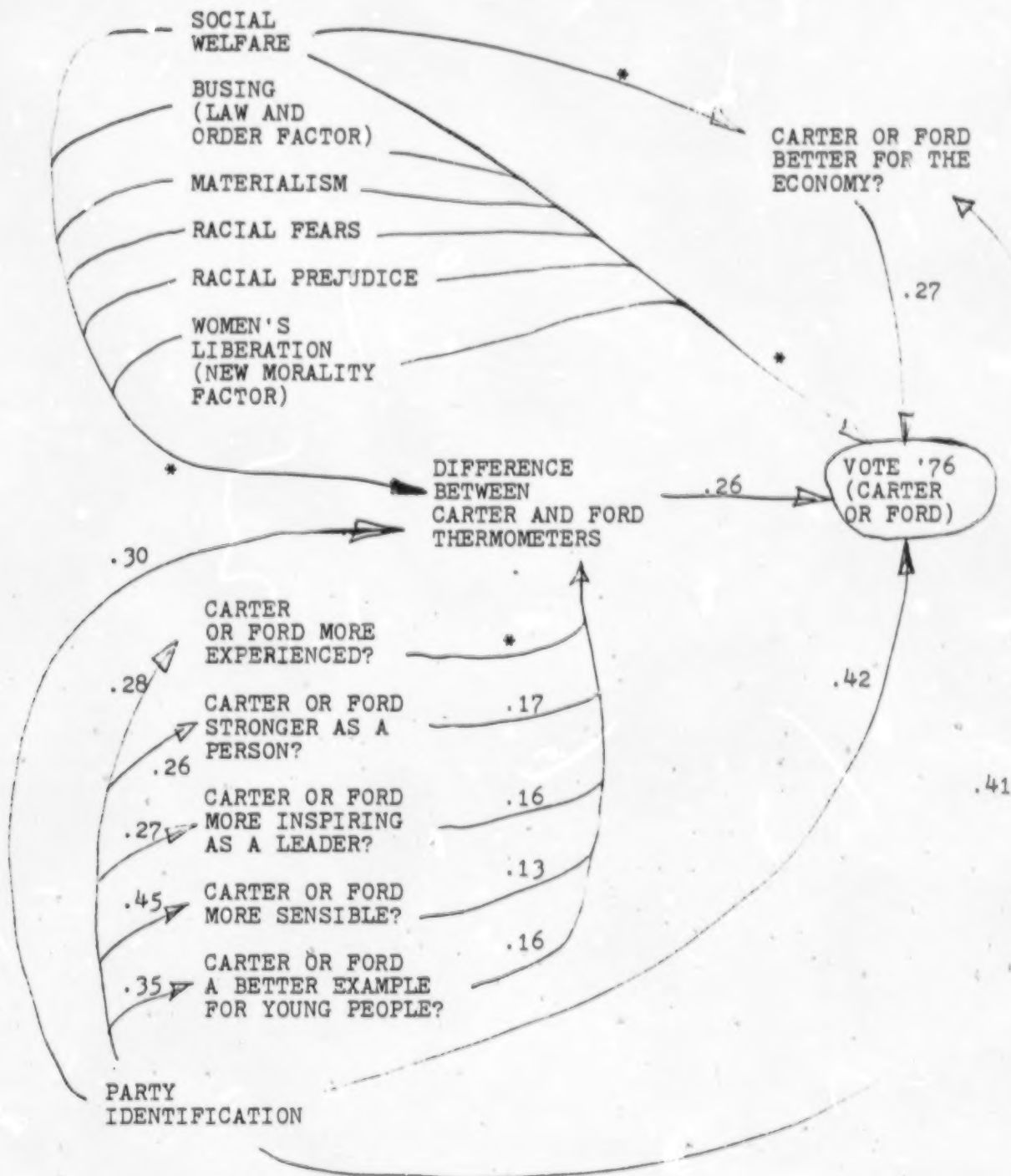
Table 8 . Percentage of Each Voting Group Taking a Conservative Position on Each Dimension of Opinion.

		McGovern Democrats ^b	Nixon Democrats ^b	Nixon Independents ^b	Nixon Republicans ^b	Chi Square Signif.
DISINTEGRATION INDICIES ^a	LAW AND ORDER	65	89	85	86	.001
	RACIAL FEARS	61	88	74	77	.005
	NEW MORALITY	71	86	63	78	.09
	RACIAL PREJUDICE	14	25	18	18	.53
ALIGNMENT INDEX ^a	SOCIAL WELFARE	26	31	49	70	.001

A. Each of these indices was constructed by taking items that loaded on the appropriate factor (see Table 3.1), dichotomizing each of the items (0 = liberal position; 1 = conservative position), adding up the score for each respondent, and then dichotomizing those scores into liberal and conservative.

B. McGovern Democrats are those who identify with the Democratic Party and who voted for McGovern. Nixon Democrats (or Republicans) are those who identify with the Democratic (or Republican) Party and who voted for Nixon. Nixon Independents are those who do not have a party identification and who voted for Nixon. Republicans and independents who voted for McGovern are so small in number that they are omitted from the table.

Figure 2. Influences on the 1976 Vote (Path Analysis)



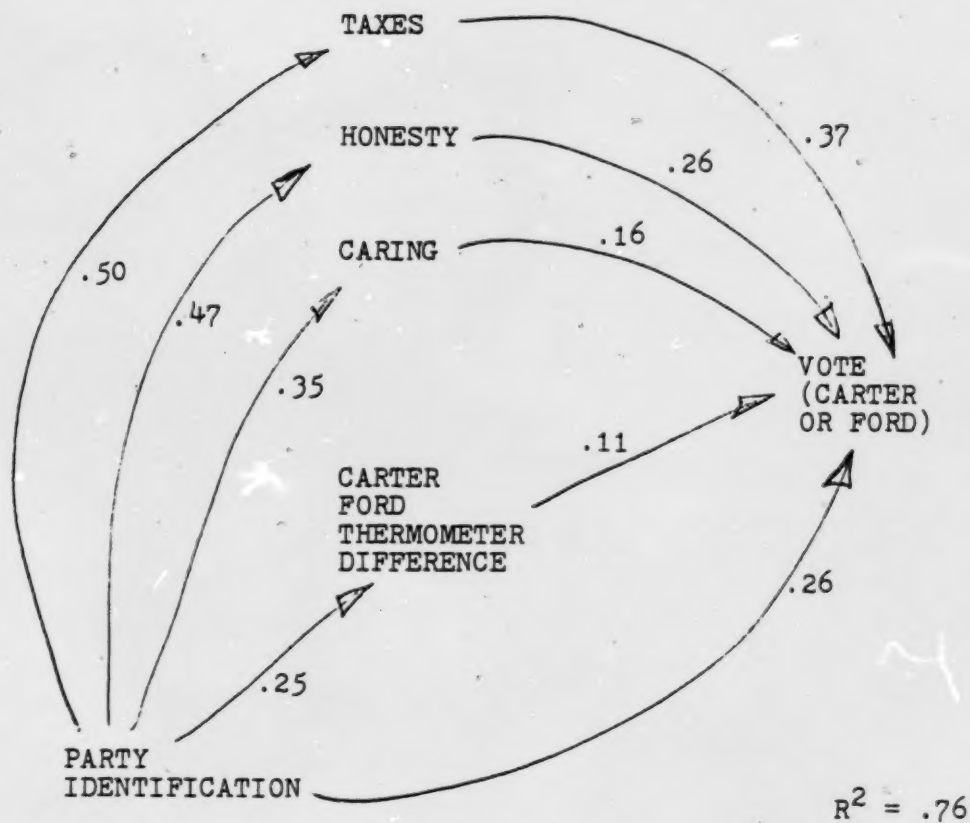
* = not a significant causal path

The negative finding led us to wonder (1) what forces did affect the vote in 1976, and (2) what relationship our seven dimensions had to those forces. On the first of these two questions, we found (Fig. 3) that the Presidential voting in 1976 could best be explained by adding the voters' evaluations of the candidates to party identification.

We reached this conclusion with the aid of nine new measures of how voters evaluate candidates.²¹ We had not yet developed such measures in our study of the 1972 election, so we had been forced to rely on the feeling thermometers. The feeling thermometers measured the warmth of feeling toward each candidate, but this was too vague to tell anything concrete about which particular qualities of character were important to voters as they chose a President. To remedy this in the 1976 election study, we added several questions designed to measure perception of leadership traits. The traits we measured in our pre-election wave are (a) who is "strong" as a person; (b) who is inspiring; (c) who seems to develop ideas that are sensible, rather than risky and dangerous; (d) who is experienced and (e) who exhibits moral leadership and is an example to young people. In the post-election wave, we added questions about (f) who could better manage the economy; (g) who is more honest; (h) who cares more "for the common people and their problems"; and (i) who will be better at "keeping down the cost of government and holding down taxes." These items were all highly intercorrelated, with the highest correlations being those between questions asked in the same wave (see Table 9). Using the last three items, plus the pre-election thermometers (Carter minus Ford) and party I.D., we could correctly predict 96 percent of the Carter vote and 91 percent of the Ford vote in a discriminant function analysis.²² This was by far the best predictive power of any set of variables in our study.

As can be seen in Table 9 the candidate images that are so important to the election outcome are significantly correlated to party identification, but are more weakly (and usually insignificantly) related to the voter's position on the issues. And even the significant bivariate correlations that do exist between image and issue positions frequently become insignificant when one controls for the effect of party identification. For example, there is a significant bivariate correlation between whether Carter or Ford is seen as better at managing the economy and such classic liberal-conservative issues as whether the government ought to see to it that everyone who wants to work gets a job and whether the government ought to make sure that all people have a decent standard of living. Once one controlled for party identification, however, this link between the voter's issue position and the image of who was better for the economy disappeared. Indeed, beliefs about which candidate would be better for the economy are also unaffected by whether the respondent had been unemployed at any time during the Ford administration; by whether one was a member of the white collar or blue collar class (as defined by job status); or by whether one was a member of a trade union. The only variable besides party identification that was a significant predictor of "Who would better manage the economy?" was, "In the past few months, have you heard mostly

Figure 3. Best Predictors of 1976 Presidential Vote



VARIABLE	DIRECT EFFECTS	INDIRECT EFFECTS THROUGH OTHER VARIABLES	TOTAL EFFECTS
PARTY I.D.	.26	.40	.66
TAXES	.37		.37
HONESTY	.26		.26
CARING	.16		.16
CARTER FORD THERMOMETER	.11		.11

Table 9. Correlations between Candidate Images, Issues, and Partisanship.

COMPARISONS OF THE CANDIDATES									
	Experi- ence	Personal Strength	Inspiring Leadership	Sensible Ideas	Moral Example	The Economy	Holding down Taxes	Hon- esty	Car- ing
Experience	1.0								
Strength	.54	1.0							
Inspiring Leadership	.49	.61	1.0						
Sensible Ideas	.58	.54	.57	1.0					
Moral Example	.51	.50	.51	.60	1.0				
Managing the Economy	.24	.22	.22	.37	.20	1.0			
Holding down Taxes	.18	.16	.17	.28	.25	.55	1.0		
Honesty	.28	.28	.21	.27	.35	.52	.53	1.0	
Caring	.28	.25	.23	.22	.29	.52	.44	.48	1.0
PARTY IDENTIFICATION	.28	.28	.26	.45	.37	.55	.49	.46	.35
ISSUES:									
Government Income	.20	.12	.20	.20	.19	.17	.19	(.08)	.24
Busing	(.01)	(.00)	(.01)	(-.01)	(-.01)	(.05)	(.02)	(.11)	(.11)
Inglehart	(-.12)	-.15	-.17	-.22	-.16	(-.03)	(-.05)	(-.09)	(-.10)
Women's Liberation	(-.08)	(-.03)	(-.01)	(-.01)	(-.07)	(-.08)	(-.07)	(-.06)	-.14
Black Employment	(.02)	(.11)	-.17	(.00)	(.08)	(-.02)	(.04)	(.09)	(-.05)
Black Militants	-.15	-.12	-.17	-.15	(-.09)	(-.11)	-.17	-.21	-.13

(All figures are Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients. Figures in parentheses are not statistically significant at the .05 level.)

good news or mostly bad news about the economy?" This suggests that the news media can have more effect on a voter's judgement about candidates' economic capabilities than the voter's actual economic hardships, ideological position, social class, or union membership. Whether Carter or Ford was more capable was not an ideological issue item, but rather a free floating campaign "theme," shaped by partisanship and by campaign advertising and media coverage. This is disturbing because whoever gets a good image about handling the economy has a very good chance of winning the election.²³

The regression analysis we have been discussing does not explain even half of the variation in judgment about who's best at handling the economy. Party identification explains 27 percent of the variance in judgment, and hearing good or bad news explains another three percent, which leaves seventy percent unexplained. In general, the candidate comparison items, while they are more highly correlated with party identification than with issue dimensions, can be thought of as a separate dimension unto themselves, and one that -- given their importance in Presidential elections -- merits more attention in future election studies. It may be that more serious attention to media variables will help increase our ability to explain the missing seventy percent of the variation, but that will have to come from a future study.

CONCLUSIONS

We have suggested that electoral politics in the mid-1970's was multi-dimensional, but that the several dimensions could be simplified down to two clusters, one of which cut across and one of which reinforced the existing party system. We began our study with the expectation that what we have come to call the Disintegration Cluster of attitudes would play a role in Presidential elections, and that it might even conceivably produce a realignment of the party system in a fashion similar to that described by Sundquist. The Disintegration Cluster did splinter the Democratic Party and contribute to the re-election of President Nixon in 1972. Our findings indicate that attitudes in the Disintegration Cluster remained very stable up until 1976. Indeed, a number of opinions in the Disintegration Cluster are more stable than opinions on any of the public opinion questions examined in the 1950's national panel. This stability suggests that the Disintegration Cluster opinions might have continued to play a role of major proportions in Presidential politics in 1976. But, in the climate created by OPEC, stagflation, and Watergate, the Disintegration Cluster attitudes declined in political salience, and the 1976 election was dominated by party identification and images of the candidates. These images of the candidates were loosely associated with the Alignment Cluster, but also seem to have been transformed by news media and advertising. Should the party system continue to disintegrate, rather than to realign or return to its old form, we are likely to continue to see elections like 1976, in which more attention will have to be paid to candidate images.

Footnotes

1. Philip E. Converse and Gregory B. Markus, "Plus ca Change...: The New CPS Election Study Panel," American Political Science Review 73(1979), 32-49.
2. There are several standard works which document the trends over time. Two of the most respected are Angus Campbell, et al. The American Voter (New York: John Wiley), 1960 and Norman Nie, et al. The Changing American Voter (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), 1976. On the subject of the new issue dimensions see the following: Herberg Weisberg and Jerrold Rusk, "Dimensions of Candidate Evaluation," American Political Science Review 64 (1970), 1167-85; Warren Miller and Theresa Levitin, Leadership and Change: Presidential Elections from 1952 to 1976 (Cambridge, Mass: Winthrop), 1976; Philip E. Converse, et al., "Continuity and Change in American Politics: Parties and Issues in the 1968 Election," American Political Science Review 63 (1969), 1083-1105; Arthur Miller, et al. "A Majority Party in Disarray: Political Polarization in the 1972 Election" American Political Science Review 70 (1976), 754-778 (plus subsequent commentaries).
3. Political Scientists learned from Campbell to distinguish between alignment and disruption. See Angus Campbell, "A Classification of Presidential Elections," in Angus Campbell, et al. Elections and the Political Order (New York: John Wiley), 1966, 63-77.
4. Sundquist provides an excellent theoretical discussion of these matters. His analysis of old and new issues is the best we have seen. James Sundquist, Dynamics of the Party System (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press), 1973.
5. Ronald Inglehart, "The Silent Revolution." American Political Science Review 65(1971) 991-1017.
6. See Kevin Philips, The Emerging Republican Majority (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington Books), 1969.
7. William A. Rusher, The Making of the New Majority Party (Columbia, Ill.: Sheed and Ward), 1975.
8. There are several books which discuss structural reasons for the weakening of the American parties. One is William J. Crotty, Political Reform and the American Experiment (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell), 1977.

9. Philip Converse and Gregory Markus, "Plus ca change...: 33.
10. Ibid., p. 44.
11. Ibid., p. 48.
12. Ibid.
13. Norman Nie with Kristi Anderson, "Mass Belief Systems Revisited: Political Change and Attitude Structure," Journal of Politics, 36 (1974), 541-591.
14. See Converse and Markus, "Plus ca Change...", pp. 34 and 48.
15. Ibid., p. 43.
16. Our study contains 45 three-wave questions asked at one-year intervals. The CPS reports about 110 questions asked (with the same wording and the same coding schemes) in three years with two-year intervals. Table 4.2 indicates that about twenty of these questions from the two studies overlap closely. For a summary of the CPS study, see Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, Guide to the CPS 1972, 1974, and 1976 American National Election Series (Ann Arbor, Michigan.: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, 1978). The totals of 45 and 110 questions refer only to opinion questions, and exclude background and demographic questions such as age, income and employment status.
17. Our continuity correlation for party identification (.74) is again similar (but slightly below) the C.P.S. two-year average for the 1972-1976 period (.81). Our results, as well as the C.P.S. results, indicate party identification to be the most stable, followed by an evaluation of known candidates, followed by opinions on the issues. See Converse and Markus, "Plus ca Change ...," p. 38. (It should be noted that our party identification correlations are based on a five-point scale, while the C.P.S. study used a seven-point scale. Even such minor differences in question format can contaminate comparisons of correlations, so all comparisons must be treated with caution.)
18. Warren Miller and Theresa Levitin also find issues important to an understanding of the 1972 vote: "The election of 1972 was the first presidential election in more than two decades in which concerns with questions of public policy were relatively more important than party identification as determinants of vote decisions by a sizeable portion of the electorate... . Even after party loyalties and perception of candidate issue positions had been taken into account, there was still

a substantial variation in voting behavior directly associated with position on the New Politics." Leadership and Change: 166 and 213.

19. Miller and Levitin, Leadership and Change, p. 62, report that in 1976, "the personal attributes of the candidates provided most of the impetus for Democrats to vote for Ford and the Republicans to vote for Carter." We agree. We here report a series of measures of voters' perceptions of the candidates not available to Miller and Levitin because they were not included in the S.R.C. questionnaire.
20. The pertinent S.R.C. findings are not directly comparable to our study because Miller and his colleagues included no entry for "Republicans" or "Nixon Republicans." They do note a "substantial degree of polarization" among the Democrats, but do not explicitly compare it to interparty differences. See Miller, et al., "Majority Party in Disarray," p. 757.
21. It is at this point -- with these measures of voters' perceptions of candidates qualities -- that we move beyond the types of questions asked in the 1972 and 1976 Michigan Center for Political Studies national survey. As will be seen below, our best predictors of Presidential voting are (in addition to party identification) these new measures of image of the candidates and perceived character of the candidates. In comparison to our study, note the CPS's very general question on which man "has the kind of personality" a President ought to have; also note their two or more specific questions about who "would bring high moral and religious standards to government" (which seems to violate a rule of question wording by mixing two items -- religion and morality), and which man "could be trusted" as President. Miller and Levitin, Leadership and Change, pp. 214-220, and 275.
22. The rank order of importance of variables is the same whether one uses the standardized regression coefficients from path analysis or the F statistics from discriminant analysis; and the sets of variables that give the highest percentage of variance explained (R^2) in path analysis give the highest percentage of voters correctly assigned in the discriminant analysis. For introductory discussions of path analysis and discriminant analysis, see Norman Nie, et al., SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (N.Y.: McGraw Hill, 1975). For a more detailed discussion of path analysis, see Otis Dudley Duncan, Introduction to Structural Equation Models (N.Y.: Academic Press, 1975). For a more detailed discussion of discriminant analysis, see Maurice Tatsouka, Discriminant Analysis the Study of Group Differences (Champaign, Ill.: Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, 1970).

Stanley Kelley and Thad Mirer, relying on pre-election data,

correctly predict 81% of the votes in the 1968 election, and do even better in some earlier years. Their results are not easily compared to ours. For one thing, they are able to make predictions in over 99 percent of the cases, whereas we can work only with the smaller group who answered all five of our predictor questions. Also, they rely exclusively on pre-election data. See their article, "The Simple Act of Voting," American Political Science Review, 68(June 1974), 572-591. See also the support for their approach in Michael Margolis, "From Confusion to Confusion: Issues and the American Voter (1956-1972)," American Political Science Review, 71(March 1977), 40-41.

23. Don Kinder and Roderick Kiewiet reach similar conclusions in their study of voting for members of Congress. They find that such voting is influenced by (partisanly shaped) "symbolic" judgments about the overall state of the economy but not by personal economic misery (e.g., unemployment of the voter.) See their "Economic Grievances and Political Behavior: the Role of Personal Discontents and Symbolic Discontents in Congressional Voting," a paper delivered at the 85th Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association, in San Francisco, California, August 26-20, 1977.